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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/CHINA: FM VERHAGEN'S MAY 16 VISIT TO
BEIJING

REF: THE HAGUE 964

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer; reasons 1.4 (b and d
).

¶1. (C) Summary: Dutch Foreign Minister Verhagen visited Beijing May 16 and met with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo, and others. According to the Dutch MFA, discussions focused on Taiwan, Sudan and human rights. Verhagen reaffirmed Dutch support for the EU arms embargo, China argued against Sudan sanctions, and the respective foreign ministers issued a communique calling for continued talks. The Dutch say they expect China to ramp up efforts this year to force an EU split on China policy. End summary.

Taiwan and China: Maintaining the status quo

¶2. (C) Emboffs met May 22 with Adriaan Palm, Head of the MFA East Asia Division and Pim van Gemeren, China Policy Officer whose portfolio includes the China arms embargo. According to Palm, Foreign Minister Verhagen's substantive discussions during his May 16 visit to Beijing focused on three issues: Taiwan, Sudan, and human rights. Palm, who accompanied Verhagen, noted that China continues to push the boundaries of the status quo, as evidenced by its move to obstruct Taiwanese participation at the Organization for Animal Health (OIE, reftel). He expects the Chinese to continue to mount pressure on European Union member states through the summer and fall and sees the OIE resolution as just one move in a larger play to split the EU.

¶3. (C) Palm noted that both China and Taiwan can be expected to continue pushing the envelope on One-China, each trying to alter the status quo to its advantage. He said the Netherlands views any change in the status quo as destabilizing. For this reason, he said, the Dutch will resist any efforts within the EU to support such changes.

Sudan: China argues against sanctions

¶4. (C) On Sudan, Palm said the newly appointed Chinese representative for Africa argued against sanctions, saying these would reduce trust and would therefore prove ineffective. (Comment: The Netherlands is one of our closest partners on Sudan and is a major contributor to AMIS and UNMIS. End comment.)

Human rights and the arms embargo

15. (C) Chinese press quoted Verhagen as saying the time was not right to discuss lifting the EU arms embargo. Palm and van Gemeren emphasized to emboffs that the GONL has no intention of agreeing to lift the embargo unless and until real progress is made on human rights. Neither thought the issue would resurface in Brussels in the near future, largely because of French intransigence on the EU's code of conduct for arms sales. Van Gemeren cautioned, though, that this should not be taken for granted. The dynamics could shift, as evidenced by a recent report of semi-autonomous Dutch think tank AIV, arguing against the embargo's human rights rationale.

Communique calls for continued Dutch-Chinese dialogue

16. (U) According to Palm, Verhagen and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang agreed on a joint communique - the first between the two countries since 1972. The communique addresses a host of issues, from market access, to international security, to human rights, and calls for continued high-level talks. Verhagen's call on Chairman Wu of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress was brief and was not substantive, Palm said.
ARNALL